

Historic, Archive Document

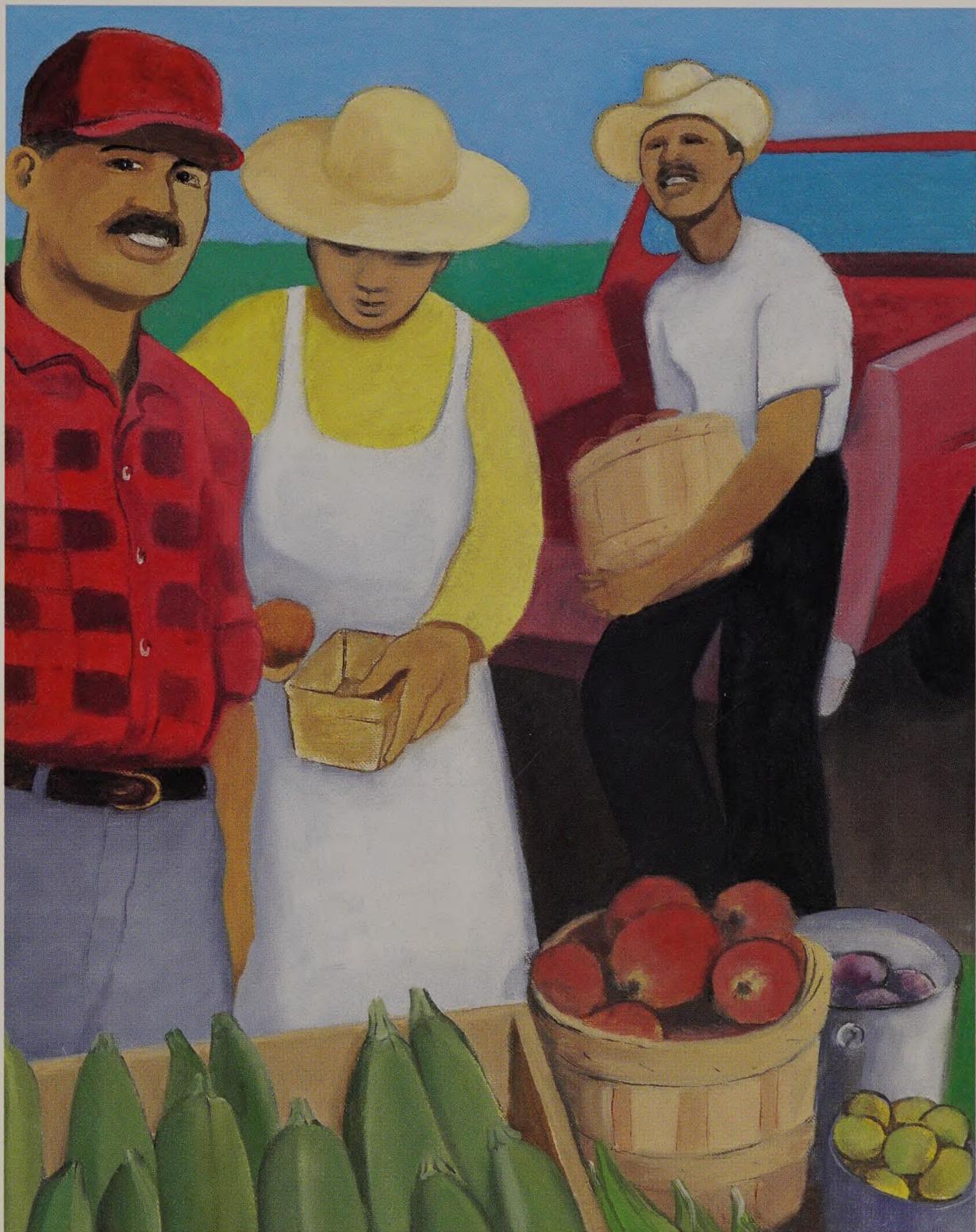
Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

United States
Department of
Agriculture

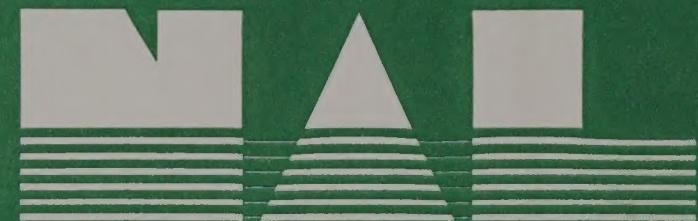
Office of Civil Rights
Enforcement

Reserve
aHD1476
.U6S65
1995

Small or Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher Initiative Departmental Action Plan Framework



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



National Agricultural Library



David Montoya, Director
Office of Civil Rights Enforcement

**From the Director's Desk
Small or Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher
(SLRF/R) "Outreach" Framework Plan**

It is my pleasure to provide this resource document for use by your agency. The plan provides guidance for program "Outreach" initiatives. This 5-year instrument was developed by a national field level USDA task force, small farmer representatives, advocacy representatives, USDA assisted committees, and land grant university staffs.

In accordance with stipulations of the 1987 Agricultural Credit Act, OCRE provides national leadership, coordination, technical assistance, consultive advice, oversight and monitoring of all agencies having direct program delivery responsibilities to SLRF/R.

This Framework Plan does not request the acquisition of new money. It does advocate redirecting current budgets to address the problems of these customers.

Secretary Dan Glickman embraces the idea of USDA improving "Outreach" to these clients.

Your agency is strongly encouraged to review problem priority statements one – seven. Include in your "Outreach" plan any suggested actions under each priority statement. The plan should cover a 5 year period. Submit Agency plans to OCRE by January 15, 1996, for review and comments.

If there are questions, please have a member of your staff contact Mr. Charles L. Whitaker Outreach program manager Small or Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher Initiative on (202) 720-6078 or Ms. Carole Powell Confidential Assistant to the Director on (202) 720-5212.

U.S.D.A., NAL

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Montoya".

FEB 13 2002
Cataloging Prep

David Montoya

Director

cc: Secretary Dan Glickman

Wardell C. Townsend, Jr.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Subject: Small or Limited Resource Farmer / Rancher Initiative Departmental Action Plan Framework

Under the direction of United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Secretary Glickman, the needs of rural communities are being brought to the forefront of our National agenda. The future of rural America, a significant but often neglected segment of our society, will be largely determined by the immediate attention directed toward her infrastructures. One such area is the plight of Small or Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers (SLRF/R) and minority producers, an area which exemplifies the need for significant actions to protect, support and promote small farmer viability in our changing world.

This need is being addressed through a number of significant SLRF/R activities, initiated within the past fifteen months. A comprehensive SLRF/R Action Plan Framework, which provides departmental guidance to state and local USDA agencies in addressing historic USDA service shortcomings, is being developed. The Plan serves as a conceptual framework for agencies to (1) examine individual and joint responsibilities for specific actions that respond to SLRF/R priority issues (2) identify required program initiatives that respond to these priorities, and (3) develop strategies to integrate targeted initiatives within ongoing program activities.

This process is being supported by a series of Team USDA Small Farmer Town Hall Meetings. The meetings are being convened to elicit specific farmer needs within targeted geographic locations. Following each meeting, a Team USDA approach is utilized to generate agency specific SLRF/R Action Plans that respond to evolving social, economic and political realities within local areas. Currently, agency SLRF/R Action Plans for Puerto Rico and Tallahassee, Florida are being finalized, and Town Hall Meetings are scheduled for California and the Virgin Islands. In addition, the six Rural Conferences, which highlighted production agriculture and family farms, continued support for the SLRF/R agenda through the continuing identification of USDA customer needs.

Currently, the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement (OCRE) has begun Departmental marketing of required policy guidance and compliance measures to support SLRF/R program development and implementation. These initiatives are being supported by the National SLRF/R Task Force, by agency designated representatives and by key agricultural/educational organizations. The following strategic steps demonstrate a commitment to addressing the evolving needs of farmers at a level of thinking and cooperative spirit far exceeding the mindset that created the current situation.

The process for developing a departmental SLRF/R Action Plan Framework was initiated, in Washington D.C., with a meeting of national agency representatives (See appendix A). That meeting was followed by a gathering, at Tuskegee University, of regionally diverse direct-service delivery personnel representing six agencies and land grant institutions (See appendix B). The Tuskegee participants to serve as the National SLRF/R Task Force.

Using the combination of professional experience and farmer input, the Team USDA Task Force Members organized their findings along seven major themes. These themes identified programmatic and personnel deficiencies not adequately addressed by past and present USDA policies and practices. During this second phase, a significant number of program activities were proposed for each

action item. This was done in an attempt to remedy historic shortcomings of USDA, particularly with respect to its relationships with this target population.

The next phase in the development of the action plan was driven by the understanding that the identification of programs alone will not achieve the desired change. Both the scope and complexity of SLRF/R issues requires that agencies examine the existing mechanisms that are needed to both sustain the required programmatic responses and systematically address the fundamental supports needed to insure their implementation. Given the existence of legislative authority under the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987 (Section 622), effective long-term program delivery necessitates specific departmental and agency policies, and corresponding compliance measures monitored by the agencies, with OCRA having general departmental oversight.

The restructured conceptual framework directs agencies to reorganize SLRF/R programs into ongoing activities. Comprehensive integration eliminates the need for the requesting of substantial budgetary increases as the first step in assisting SLRF/Rs. Consequently, this process requires agency personnel to begin with the appropriate reapportionment of current funding.

Regional Task Force meetings were convened in Atlanta and Dallas (See appendix C) to begin the task of generating the policy and compliance measures needed to underwrite selected programs drawn from the reorganized themes of Commitment, Personnel, Outreach, Representation and Markets. The current charge of OCRA is to incorporate this information and achieve the goal of developing a departmental SLRF/R Action Plan. By incorporating the recommendations from the Task Force membership, current efforts include preparing a draft plan to be shared with National agency representatives for comment. Once these comments have been obtained, a final document will be prepared.

The goal of Team USDA is to coordinate combined resources and thereby maximize producer assistance. Never has this task been as daunting as it is with respect to small or limited resource farmers/ranchers and socially disadvantaged producers. For more than 30 years, there has been documented evidence of USDA service shortcomings. In order to end this cycle of neglect, it is imperative that each agency commit to a review and a realignment of their agency plan in accordance with Departmental recommendations. Only by the identification and addition of corresponding policy and compliance measures will the critically needed programs have the opportunity to succeed.

Small or Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers Planning Framework

I. Initial Planning

Washington DC
2/94
SLRF/R
Departmental Outreach
Program Needs &
Obstacles



II. National Task Force

Tuskegee, AL
5/94

- Team USDA
- Established 7 Priority Areas & Action Items



III. Conceptual Framework

OCRE's SLRF/R Action Plan Team
Washington DC
2/95

- Reviewed Draft Priorities & Actions
- Reorganized/Restructured SLRF/R Priorities & Action Items
- Developed Planning Model



V. Critical Actions

Washington DC
6/95

Commitment

- Secretary Glickman's Rural America Meetings
- Agency Heads Adopt Plan

Personnel

- Agencies Develop Individual Plans
- OCRE Provides Oversight Monitoring & Compliance

Outreach

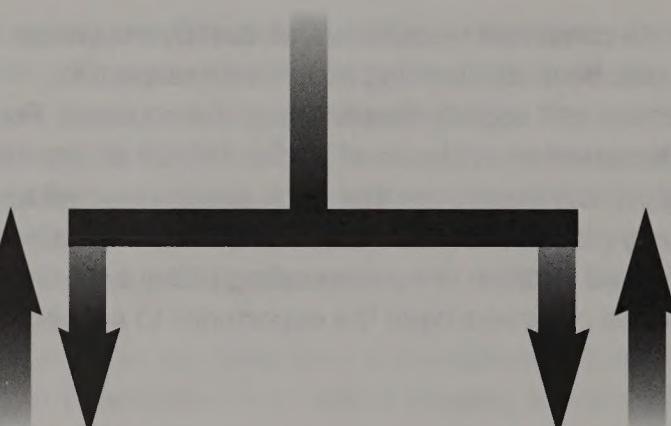
- Field Level Feedback via Task Force
- Develop Outreach Standards

Representation

- Customer Participation via Sec. Glickman's Rural America Meetings
- Boards, Committees and Councils

Markets

- Marketing Opportunities Through Partnerships with 1890's, 1862's HACU's & CBO's



IV. Regional Task Force Meetings

Atlanta, GA

2/95

Dallas, TX

2/95

- Culturally Sensitive Materials & Personnel
- Alternative Markets
- Board and Committees
- Redirection of Resources
- Committees

Small Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers Planning Framework

I. Initial Planning

The Small or Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher Initiative, in accordance with the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987, Sec. 622, requires that the Secretary of Agriculture "maintain substantially at the levels in effect on the date of the enactment of this title, the small or limited resource farmers' initiative in the office of the Director of the Office of Advocacy and Enterprise." This is now the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement (OCRE).

The Small Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers (SLRF/R) Program Manager provides national leadership, coordination, consultative advice, technical assistance and compliance monitoring for all USDA agencies with direct SLRF/R program delivery responsibilities. The significant problems experienced by a majority of small and minority farmers and producers requires that OCRE assist with the development of policies that allow agencies to more effectively manage the delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of these customers.

Following a request to agency leadership for national-level representatives with SLRF/R field-level experience, OCRE convened a Washington, D.C. meeting to identify outreach program delivery obstacles experienced at the departmental level. Some of the obstacles or needs identified include:

- A lack of coordination and cooperation between agencies;
- The need for a clearly identified coordinator of outreach services within each agency;
- The importance of incorporating SLRF/R programming within the general body of agency activities/funding;
- A general lack of follow-up, reporting and evaluation of ongoing programs;
- The lack of a commonly accepted definition of SLRF/R;
- The importance of recognizing the cultural and social factors associated with working with this population; and
- The need to establish national, state and local alliances with state departments of agriculture, food and agriculture committees, the private sector, the farm press, and community and special interest groups.

A second purpose of the meeting was to identify field-level USDA personnel throughout the country who could be convened to develop a five-year Action Plan. The intent of the plan would be to develop action items that respond to identified SLRF/R priority-level problems and to propose SLRF/R program solutions.

SLRF/R PLANNING FRAMEWORK

II. National Task Force

Field-level employees from the Forest Service (FS), the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), and the Extension Service (ES) met at Tuskegee University, Alabama, on May 3 and 4, 1994. The group was charged with the task of identifying obstacles and barriers which prevent effective program outreach to small or limited-resource farmers and ranchers and developing recommendations to overcome the barriers.

Other responsibilities included beginning the process of developing better working relationships among agency field-level personnel and identifying common issues that require multi-agency actions. Following extensive discussions on needs related to redirection of funding, agency responsibilities and bureaucratic realities, field-level experiences, variations in definitions, cultural factors and demographics, the group identified seven priority-level problems:

- Allocation of current funding is inadequate to initiate and operate an efficient USDA SLRF/R Outreach Initiative.
- There is a lack of effective coordination and cooperation between agencies and institutions that deliver programs and services to SLRF/Rs.
- There is a need to provide SLRF/Rs with better, more easily understood information on the programs and services of USDA agencies.
- Outreach personnel in the SLRF/R community are inadequate/ineffective, which highlights the need for paraprofessionals and other methods of reaching the underserved.
- There is a lack of diversity on USDA-assisted boards/councils/committees, with minorities, people with disabilities and women greatly underrepresented.
- The system for managerial accountability and program monitoring and compliance is in need of repair.
- There is a lack of economic viability, mostly due to inaccessibility to dependable markets among SLRF/Rs.

The second part of the meeting focused on developing problem solutions that respond to each identified priority:

- Each agency should be responsible for developing budget line-items from current program allocations to support SLRF/R program initiatives.
- A clearinghouse, located centrally, should be established where material and information can be stored and retrieved by all USDA agencies and institutions.
- The use of paraprofessionals is one method that should be used to reach target groups.
- Effective outreach programs should be developed and implemented to encourage and attract full participation of underrepresented groups.
- Agencies should develop and implement an accountability and evaluation process for supervisors and managers having SLRF/R outreach responsibilities.
- The number and length of forms requesting USDA assistance and required to be filled out by SLRF/Rs should be reduced and simplified.
- A series of small farmer public hearings should be held at 1890/1862/HACU/American Indian educational institutions and community-based organizations.

The preliminary five-year Action Plan, drafted subsequent to the meeting, included an extensive list of action items to address each priority area.

Preliminary SLRF/R Action Plan

Action Item One

Problem Priority:

Allocation of current funding is inadequate to initiate and operate efficient SLRF/R initiatives.

Issue Statement:

This situation addresses the need for adequate funds to ensure that SLRF/R assistance reaches farmers/ranchers.

Actions:

1. Each agency is responsible for budget line-items to specifically execute SLRF/R initiatives. Funding should be clearly identified for the SLRF/R initiatives.
 - a. This budget, including initiatives, will be submitted to OCRE for review and comments. At a minimum, the budget items should include:
 - (1) Funds to sponsor workshops and seminars/special projects/demonstrations.
 - (2) Support staff.
 - (3) Partnerships with schools teaching agriculture and community-based organizations.
2. Training and outreach materials should include diversity of language, cultural traditions, and contractor support.
3. Request congressional funding for FY 96 for agencies required to maintain offices on Indian reservations by Section 2501-G of the 1990 Farm Bill.
4. Special Secretary's Initiative: Request the Secretary/congressional leadership to develop a USDA Training Center at a National Forest located in Mississippi. Using current appropriations, all USDA Mission Areas would contribute to fund the establishment of this center and establish their individual visitor displays.
 - a. The center will support training for the SLRF/Rs. Emphasis will be placed on forest stewardship. Training will also be provided to regional/state/federal managers and employees, as well as independent loggers and woodcutters.
 - b. The center will provide recreation and tourism for the community, and create jobs in the state and surrounding communities.
5. Establish special funding provisions for Reservations/Tribal Nations.
6. Provide "One-Stop Shopping" services by eliminating the need for a farmer or rancher to make multiple trips to multiple locations to meet their needs. Co-locations of offices and having one application simplified to serve all USDA agencies are examples of what is needed.
7. Establish affordable crop, property and liability insurance for small farmers, ranchers and socially disadvantaged producers.

8. Establish a legitimate outreach program for small farmers/ranchers and minorities that is truly helpful, meaningful and specifically targeted to those customers that will not be taken over by the large farmers.
9. Provide more USDA assistance to community-based organizations and schools that teach agriculture with successful programs to help small farmers/ranchers and minorities to be profitable and to maintain and increase their land-base.
10. Increase the number of bilingual informational materials, programs and staff to meet the needs of diverse customers.
11. Establish via cooperative agreements and partnerships “minority-friendly” lending institutions.
12. Explore and implement methods that will reduce “land loss” among SLRF/Rs and minorities.
13. Increase the number of special outreach initiatives in socially disadvantaged communities.
14. Propose language to be included in the 1995 Farm Bill to increase loans and funding for special initiatives to SLRF/R and minorities.
15. Place special emphasis on the need to employ paraprofessionals and use other methods to seek out and assist those farmers/ranchers needing USDA assistance but never go into a USDA office to request it.
16. Plan, develop and implement ways to involve SLRF/R and minorities on USDA boards, councils and committees.
17. Review, revise and reform USDA regulations and agency policy and program barriers to participation for SLRF/Rs and minorities.
18. Provide training to field-level employees regarding their responsibilities to SLRF/Rs and assistance to these customers.
19. Develop computerized networks through 1890s, HACUs and community-based organizations that will better serve farmers/ranchers and encourage self-service where possible.
20. Develop partnerships with key community-based organizations that can help SLRF/Rs gain, interpret and put new ideas and information into practice.

Action Item Two**Problem Priority:**

Lack of coordination and cooperation between agencies and institutions that deliver programs and services to SLRF/Rs.

Issue Statement:

- Lack of communication among 1890 and 1862 land grant institutions, HACU and American Indian schools and community based organizations that deliver programs and services to SLRF/R.
- Many USDA agencies do not communicate or coordinate with each other at all levels.
- Agencies/institutions are not familiar with information/products/programs developed by each other to benefit SLRF/Rs.

Actions:

1. Assemble departmental Quality Assurance Multi-Agency teams to assure program delivery.
2. Conduct in-service education to ensure all agencies/institutions at all levels understand USDA agency program mission.
3. Create/update MOUs involving all agencies to fulfill program needs.
4. Establish a central location (clearinghouse) where materials/information can be stored and retrieved by all USDA agencies/institutions.
5. Establish an E-Mail network that allows all USDA agencies/institutions to communicate/coordinate information.
6. Establish a line of communication between all agencies/institutions/producers using bilingual pamphlets, newsletters, etc.

Action Item Three**Problem Priority:**

Inadequate/ineffective outreach, including the lack of paraprofessionals and other methods to extend into the SLRF/R community.

Issue Statement:

Most traditional USDA programs and policies do not address special problems associated with SLRF/Rs. Language barriers, information at inappropriate reading levels, farmers located in remote areas with little awareness of programs, and lack of sensitivity by USDA staff all create obstacles to participation. USDA agencies have failed to adequately market their services. Restructuring and county office consolidation have an adverse impact on current and future outreach efforts.

Actions:

1. Work with institutions and groups to develop informational materials and fact sheets, at the appropriate reading level/language for clientele.
2. Employ paraprofessionals to reach targeted groups.
3. Develop effective USDA training programs to enable staff to meet the needs of SLRF/R.
4. Develop sensitivity awareness training programs for USDA employees with outreach responsibilities to SLRF/R.
5. Market SLRF/R program opportunities throughout local communities (e.g. church groups, farm bureaus, displays in malls, schools).
6. Develop strategies on working with grassroots and community-based organizations to identify needs and issues of SLRF/R.
7. Have agencies develop plans/strategies to reach SLRF/Rs having part-time or full-time off-farm employment (e.g. flexible work schedules, etc.).
8. Increase on-farm demonstrations and research in SLRF/R communities.

Action Item Four

Problem Priority:

Lack of diversity (specifically minorities, women, and people with disabilities) on boards, committees and councils.

Issue Statement:

The situation addresses the lack of representation of membership on those boards, committees, councils and advisory groups that have power and influence on policy and program decisions.

Actions:

1. Review make-up of all boards, councils and committees to determine representation; compare with population data and report findings to OCRE.
2. Review/evaluate current regulations.
3. Enforce newly revised regulations.
4. Encourage board members to receive training on effective delivery of programs and services to SLRF/Rs.
5. Develop/implement effective outreach programs to encourage/attract full participation of underrepresented groups.
6. Require each USDA state office to provide training to SLRF/Rs on how to access and fully participate in USDA programs and services.
7. Develop, implement and enforce a comprehensive field-level workforce diversity plan to improve employee sensitivity in working with these clients.
8. Require all agencies to keep bids and contracts for goods and services within guidelines of "Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Program." Actively seek bids and contracts from SLRF/R.

Action Item Five**Problem Priority:**

The system for managerial accountability, program monitoring and compliance of the SLRF/R Initiative is inadequate.

Issue Statement:

There is no effective, systematic process for program management, accountability, monitoring and compliance.

Actions:

1. SLRF/R policies and procedures must be developed and disseminated to all USDA agencies.
2. Agencies will develop and implement an accountability and evaluation process for SLRF/Rs.
3. Agencies will develop a 5-year strategic plan for SLRF/R responsibilities.
4. Agencies will report annually, by September 1st, to the Secretary, via OCRE, accomplishments of the SLRF/R program.
5. With OCRE coordination, agencies will develop both intra- and interagency collaborative relationships on planned initiatives.
6. OCRE will establish “interagency/grassroots evaluation teams” to evaluate annual reports submitted by USDA agencies.
7. OCRE will establish annual informational seminars for top-level managers to explain SLRF/R initiatives and how to make programs more efficient and effective.
8. OCRE will establish “interagency/grassroots compliance review teams” to make on-site assessments of SLRF/R program strategies.
9. OCRE will work with agencies to determine how they define small or limited resource farmers and ranchers.

Action Item Six**Problem Priority:**

Most policies, programs and procedures mitigate against full participation by SLRF/Rs.

Issue Statement:

Excessive paperwork required by many USDA policies and complicated procedures limit the ability of most SLRF/Rs to participate fully in USDA programs.

Action

1. Reduce the length and number of USDA forms required for SLRF/Rs to participate in USDA programs.
2. Revise the language in USDA policies and procedures so that it is easily understood and is culturally sensitive to these clients.
3. Develop policies and procedures for all agencies to reach out to SLRF/R.
4. Make those personnel responsible for providing program benefits to SLRF/R accountable in performing required duties.
5. Require evaluation of personnel to reflect performance in the area of outreach (critical element) to SLRF/Rs.
6. Modify and/or develop specific eligibility criteria to address the needs of SLRF/R residing on Indian reservations.
7. Develop specific regulations in the Farm Bill to ensure long-term commitment to outreach to SLRF/Rs.
8. Develop and expand new program areas for youth who are interested in careers and vocations in agriculture.

Action Item Seven

Problem Priority:

Lack of economic viability, competitiveness and alternative markets among SLRF/Rs.

Issue Statement:

A mechanism needs to be in place to identify avenues for assisting SLRF/Rs with determining the economic viability of their farms, and locating competitive and alternative markets for their products.

Actions:

1. Develop/establish a series of farmer hearings to be held at community-based organizations 1862/1890/HACU/American Indian educational institutions. Each hearing will address the economic viability of competitive markets among SLRF/R.
 2. Establish an annual national conference of advocacy groups, community-based organizations, grassroots leaders, USDA officials and agency personnel who represent SLRF/Rs to discuss program redirection, policy changes and special initiatives.
 3. In cooperation with 1862/1890/HACU/American Indian educational institutions, use USDA's inventory farms (foreclosed properties) as incubators to train farmers/ranchers in specialty farming/ranching methods.
 4. Implement procedures to allow FSA/NRCS/FS to advance SLRF/R producers cost-share funds to install conservation practices on highly erodible land and up-front money for carrying out other forest management practices.
 5. Form partnership with educational institutions and community-based organizations to develop a national direct network marketing center to include SLRF/R interests.
 6. Encourage AMS to devote more resources to development of SLRF/R skills related to marketing their products.
-

III. Conceptual Framework

SLRF/R PLANNING FRAMEWORK

OCRE's Washington, D.C.-based SLRF/R Action Plan Team performed a careful review of National Task Force Member comments on the Preliminary Action Plan. A conceptual framework was developed based on the understanding that the identification of programs alone will not achieve the desired change. The Team then focused on existing mechanisms within agencies that require examination in order to both sustain the targeted programmatic actions and systematically address the fundamental supports needed to ensure their implementation. Proposed SLRF/R actions were then restructured/reorganized based on policy requirements, needed implementation strategies, and the identification of specific compliance responsibilities.

The resulting planning model identified five priority issue areas, shown on the following page, which capture each of the problem priorities indicated in the Preliminary SLRF/R Action Plan. In order to test this model, regional workshops were designed to capture regional and local needs as National Task Force members addressed policy, program and compliance requirements for previously mentioned SLRF/R activities in support of critical action items.

| Issue | Suggested Action Items | Activity |
|--------------------------|---|----------|
| 1. Commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Department-wide central SLRF/R Budget – Funded by agency assessments B. Each agency develop a 5 year SLRF/R strategic plan C. Review, evaluate & revise current SLRF/R regulations | |
| 2. Personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Develop departmental in-service educational training on SLRF/Rs for employees at all levels B. All agencies will develop & implement an accountability & evaluation process for SLRF/R programs C. Develop internal departmental clearing house of SLRF/R programs including E-Mail network | |
| 3. Outreach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Development of culturally sensitive informational materials B. Employ paraprofessionals to reach targeted groups C. Develop strategies for working with grassroots organizations | |
| 4. Representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Encourage the revision of all USDA assisted boards, councils, & committees to reflect local populations B. Review policies & procedures of state & local committees C. Assist to recruit local small or limited resource producers to serve on appropriate boards, councils & committees | |
| 5. Markets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Develop/establish a series of farmer hearings on alternative markets to be held at land-grant colleges B. Develop a national direct network marketing center to include SLRF/R interests C. Re-evaluate traditional administration of cost-sharing & inventory farm programs to accommodate SLRF/R needs | |

SLRF/R Planning Framework

SLRF/R Planning Framework

The National SLRF/R Task Force was reconvened during February of 1995 with the purpose of continuing the work on the National Initiative. The meetings' two primary objectives were to 1) review the draft action items and 2) incorporate these items into the proposed Conceptual Model. In an effort to facilitate the small group process and to better accommodate the divergent interests represented within the original assembly, two sessions were scheduled. The first session was composed of Team USDA and Community-Based Organization (CBO) representatives from states east of the Mississippi and met in Atlanta, GA, while in the second session agency personnel from the western states met in Dallas, TX.

At this meeting the members of the SLRF/R Team presented the fundamentals of the Conceptual Model and then submitted to participants the principal workshop assignment of incorporating the draft plan's action items into the format of that model.

Additional materials were presented and discussions held on the impact of USDA office closures. Demographic analysis, utilizing data from the 1992 Agricultural Census, helped our review of the office realignments from the perspectives of the location of minority producers to the offices. Farm acreage and annual farm income were also considered. Further discussion highlighted the significance of additional demographic factors such as the relationship of producer employment status (part-time vs. full-time and 1st vs. 2nd shift) and USDA office hours. The final segment of the meeting was an open discussion on alternatives to be implemented both within and outside of the Department in an effort to market the SLRF/R Plan.

The portion of the meeting dedicated to the expansion and implementation of the Conceptual Framework centered on each small group taking one of the five major issues and selecting from within that issue a primary focus, e.g., issue - markets, primary focus - alternative markets; or issue - outreach, primary focus - budget. Each group completed a grid that analyzed the primary focus with respect to policy, program and compliance for agencies on the national, state and local levels and for land grant institutions. The object of this exercise was to demonstrate that the development of local programs to remedy systematic institutional deficiencies was in itself not a sufficient response. In order for issue-based programs to meet with significant long-term success, policy modifications must be made on the national, state and local levels. It is equally important that these policies and programs be monitored in accordance with specific compliance measures on all three levels. It is critical to note that accountability measures must be carried out first within an agency and then supported by OCRE.

Examples of this process are as follows.

1. Major Issue: Marketing

Primary Focus: Alternative Markets

| Policy | Program | Compliance |
|---|--|--|
| National – Promote non-traditional farming enterprises. | National – Establish program goals & objectives for alternative markets. | National – Conduct an annual evaluation of goals & objectives. |
| State – Identify suitable/appropriate non-traditional enterprises. | State – Provide financial & personnel resources for targeted program. | State – Include responsibilities for directing alternative marketing program in a specific job description. |
| Local – Identify alternative market priorities. | Local – Develop program to introduce alternative market to producers. | Local – Include review of alternative marketing program in performance evaluation. |
| Land Grant – Commit to the priority of providing alternative marketing training. | Land Grants – Provide training on production and management of alternative enterprises. | Land Grants – Review program performance to justify future funding. |

2. Major Issue: Representation

Primary Focus: Target Population Representation on Boards, Committees & Councils

| Policy | Program | Compliance |
|--|---|--|
| National – Establish policy indicating necessity of encouraging USDA assisted boards to acquire proportional SLRF/R representation. | National – Develop training program for state-level personnel on how to organize local field-level staff to work closely with USDA assisted boards to recruit potential board & council representatives. | National – Review & evaluate established state-level program responsiveness with respect to policy on representation. |
| State – Establish monitoring parameters for equitable opportunities for representation on such boards. | State – Train field-level staff to develop appropriate materials to assist newly elected board, council and committee members. | State – Review & evaluate local responsiveness to training program and recruitment successes. |
| Local – Establish target goals to encourage representation expectations. | Local – Implement local outreach effort to work with USDA assisted boards, councils, committees to identify potential board & council members. | Local – Solicit feedback from target-group board & council members regarding their experiences as representatives. |
| Land Grants – Establish in-house expertise capable of documenting adequate/proportional levels of representation. | Land Grants – Assist with the training of local SLRF/R producers on the significance & responsibilities of board participation. | Land Grants – Conduct formal evaluation process to verify status of local outreach program. |

3. Major Issue: Personnel

Primary Focus: Personnel Training on Needs & Concerns of SLRF/R'S

| Policy | Program | Compliance |
|--|--|--|
| National – The Secretary & Agency Heads mandate that all personnel receive SLRF/R training. | National – Develop a TEAM USDA clearing-house of information on SLRF/R's. | National – Develop an annual report on agency-wide SLRF/R activity for the Secretary's Office. |
| State – State develop strategic plan to implement national policy including a state-wide support resource team. | State – Implement strategic plan. | State – Document annually an evaluation of strategic plan with appropriate commentary in individual performance appraisals. |
| Local – Develop timetable & implementation strategies to carry out state plan. | Local – Participate in organized training activities & individually conduct an outreach activity. | Local – Individually evaluate effectiveness of training activities & set goals/objectives for the next year. |
| Land Grant – Develop supplemental programs to help train state and local-level personnel. | Land Grant – Conduct in-service training program for USDA personnel & paraprofessionals. | Land Grants – Conduct evaluations to determine effectiveness of training & strategic plan among USDA personnel & area SLRF/R producers. |

The level and intensity of discussion by Task Force members served as a clear indication of both individual and agency commitment to SLRF/Rs. At the end of each session, participants declared their willingness to continue to assist OCRE with the process of developing a National Initiative. As a result, the SLRF/R Program Manager responded by asking each Task Force member to personally meet with their respective state leadership to share the Initiative, once it was developed and to report back with comments and concerns. Members were also asked to continue to provide field-level feedback to OCRE, and finally a commitment was made to involve them—to the extent possible—in OCRE field-level compliance reviews conducted on SLRF/R program activities.

V. Critical Actions

SLRF/R Planning Framework

Commitment:

Several marketing strategies will be implemented to support the endorsement and adoption of the SLRF/R Planning Framework by USDA agencies with SLRF/R responsibilities.

Personnel:

The underlying objective of the requested 5-year SLRF/R Action Plan developed by each agency is the redirection of existing resources. Additionally, agencies will be required to report SLRF/R accomplishments on a semi-annual basis. OCRA will conduct random on-site reviews to validate accomplishment reports. The on-site review process will be supported by the active participation of selected National SLRF/R Task Force members, and results will be reported to the Secretary.

Outreach:

The National SLRF/R Task Force will operate as a standing committee to assess the impact of agency plans on SLRF/R viability. Weaknesses in plans will be documented and reported to OCRA, which will prepare annual agency report cards on SLRF/R accomplishments. These Report Cards will be shared with the Secretary and distributed among all USDA agencies. It is projected that National SLRF/R Outreach Standards and Procedures will begin development in the year 2000, based on the documented experiences captured by this report and review process.

Representation:

The needs of SLRF/R customers will be consistently sought and documented in order to guide further development of SLRF/R initiatives. The information gathered during Secretary Glickman's National Rural Conferences, '95, supports the SLRF/R Planning Model, which provides for flexibility in meeting the special needs of rural America based on the unique needs of various rural agricultural cultures.

Examples of the range of diverse farming/ranching issues requiring immediate response, based on geographical location, include: the need to promote public/private agricultural partnerships in response to dramatic market swings in Davis, CA; the need to increase the involvement of youth in agricultural opportunities so that long-standing family farms are not lost in both Abilene, TX, and Reading, PA; the need for educational opportunities in agriculture supported by 1890 institutions and the impact of existing and projected world markets in Fort Valley, GA; the new uses for agricultural products and delineation of wetlands in Bismarck, ND; and the focus on communications products and strategies supporting agriculture that have been targeted in Edwardsville, IL.

Examination and resolution of issues that represent "no simple recipe, no single voice" will continue to be sought through Small Farmer/Rancher Town Hall Meetings, developed by OCRA. These sessions will not only feature success stories, but provide opportunities for on-site examination of continuing obstacles by both agency representatives and impacted farmers.

Markets:

Specific USDA agencies with marketing responsibilities will be required to establish demonstration projects and other proactive initiatives in collaboration with community-based organization 1862/1890/ HACU/American Indian educational institutions. OCRA has targeted both the development of an inventory farm program to address the drastic reduction in the number of minority farmers and the need to promote the development of alternative markets. Additionally, a National Direct Network Marketing Center that is accessible to all USDA agencies will be planned in cooperation with educational institutions and community-based organizations.

APPENDIX A

**Initial SLRF/R
Planning Meeting
Washington, D.C.
February, 1994
Participants**

Sandi Brewster-Walker, OPA
Cliff J. Herron, FmHA
Ted Patterson, ASCS
Rosendo Trevino, SCS
William B. Patton, ASCS
Melissa Hammond, SCS
Edith Thomas, ES
Chester Bailey, FmHA
John Kusano, OCRE
Maxine Barron, SCS
Denis Ebodaghe, ES
Roberto Franco, OCRE
Benjamin Smallwood, SCS
Robert Shepard, Science
Engineering Alliance
Frank Clearfield, SCS,
Facilitator

APPENDIX B

**SLRF/R
Task Force Meeting
Tuskegee, AL
May, 1994
Participants**

Roberto Franco, OCRE
Mary McLinnis, ASCS
Ralph Childers, FmHA
Jacob Crandall, SCS
Jose Acevedo, SCS
Tom Collins, SCS
Jesse Myers, FmHA
George Greaser, ES
Richard Fortune, FS
Larry Sanchez, ASCS
Marion Simon, ES
Levi Sandoval, SCS
Dirk Charley, FS
Otis Jones, FS
Clifford Herron, FmHA
Ted Patterson, ASCS
Bruce Nelson, ASCS
Daniel Lyons, ES
Denis Ebodaghe, ES
Edith Thomas, ES
David Wiggins, FCIC
Bill Buchanan, FCIC
Berthel Thomas, SCS
Bill Patton, ES
Delores Maese, FS
Frankie Stith-Scott, FmHA
Ricky Morrow, FCIC
York Glover, ES
Del Breland, Advocate

APPENDIX C

**SLRF/R Eastern Regional
Task Force
Atlanta, GA
Feb. 22 & 23, 1995
Participants**

Mary McLinnis
County Executive Director,
USDA/CFSA
George Greaser
Senior Research Assistant,
University of Pennsylvania
Jacob Crandall
Area Conservationist,
USDA/NRCS
Jose Acevedo
Deputy State Conservationist,
USDA/NRCS
Tom Collins
Soil Conservationist,
USDA/NRCS
Marion Simon
USDA/CREES
Kentucky State University
Otis Jones
Minority Outreach Coordinator,
USDA/FS
Frankie Stith-Scott
County Supervisor,
USDA/CFSA
Ricky Morrow
USDA/CFSA
Valdosta, GA
York Glover
USDA/CREES
Clemson University
William Patton
Agronomy Specialist,
Alcorn State University
Del Breland
Small Farm Advocate
Frederick, MD
Ralph Paige
Director,
Federation of Southern
Cooperatives/Land Trust
Mike Alexander, OCRE
Special Assistant to the Director
Carole Powell, OCRE
Confidential Assistant to the
Director
Vivian Dixon
Natural Resources Conservation
Service

**SLRF/R Western
Regional Task Force
Dallas, TX
Feb. 27 & 28, 1995
Participants**

Ralph Childers
Chief Farmer Programs,
USDA/CFSA
Jesse Myers
Civil Rights Coordinator,
USDA/CFSA
Larry Sanchez
County Executive Director,
USDA/CFSA
Levi Sandoval
District Conservationist,
USDA/NRCS
Dirk Charley
Equal Employment Manager,
USDA/FS Sierra National Forest
Floid Bell
Resource Conservationist,
USDA/NRCS
Burthel Thomas
Area Conservationist,
USDA/NRCS
Mike Sommerville
Ecological Science & Planning,
USDA/NRCS
Nancy Peterson
c/o Bruce Nelson
State Executive Director,
USDA/CFSA
Gilbert Vigil
Assistant Director of State &
Private Forestry,
USDA/FS
Carole Powell, OCRE
Confidential Assistant to the
Director

*NOTE: Charles L. Whitaker,
Outreach Program Manager,
Small or Limited Resource
Farmer/Rancher Initiative served
as Team Leader to the Planning
Committee and task force.*



